

retired to prepared positions at Chippawa. The U.S. forces scouted these positions, but did not attack, sending instead a small force to destroy Cook's Mills. Here they were defeated on October 19th, and retired once more to Fort Erie, which they blew up on November 5th, and crossed the river to Buffalo. This was the last presence of U.S. forces on Canadian soil.

## Restoration

In 1904, the Government of Canada erected a thirty-foot monument near the ruins of the Fort, and this monument now covers the mass grave of 153 British, Canadian and United States soldiers whose remains were found during the restoration of the Fort.

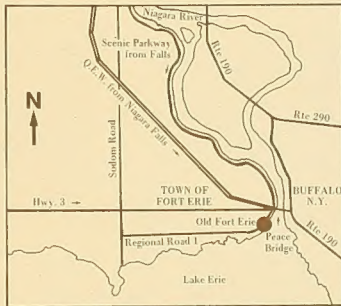
In 1908, The Niagara Parks Commission began the development and maintenance of the parkland around the Fort. The Fort itself was left in ruins until 1937, when restoration was commenced jointly by the Provincial and Federal Governments. The Fort was restored to its most famous period (1812 - 14) and was officially opened on July 1st, 1939.

## Old Fort Erie Today

The Fort and its beautiful grounds are now under the management of The Niagara Parks Commission. Restoration has been founded on careful research and painstaking workmanship. Some of the barracks rooms are furnished, while others display interesting collections of regimental badges,

buttons and other military mementoes, including martial equipment of the period, and a superb collection of military prints. To explain to visitors the heroic siege of August 1814, a large scale model illustrates the British and American fortifications. Visitors are conducted through the museum and many display rooms by guards dressed in the 1812 - 14 period uniforms of the British 8th Regiment which built, defended and besieged the Fort. During the summer months, these guards also stand sentry duty, fire the cannons, demonstrate drill and musket practice — all in all a re-enactment of some of the duties of the soldier of 1812 - 14.

Come and visit, won't you?



Travel north from Old Fort Erie along the entire 35 miles of the scenic Niagara Parkway.

Other historic locations within The Niagara Parks System include Stoney Creek Battlefield House, McFarland House, Oak Hall Estate Mansion, the Willoughby Historical Museum and Mackenzie House (Queenston).

For information on these and other attractions and facilities, write to:



The Niagara Parks Commission  
Box 150, Dept. E  
Niagara Falls, Ontario  
L2E 6T2

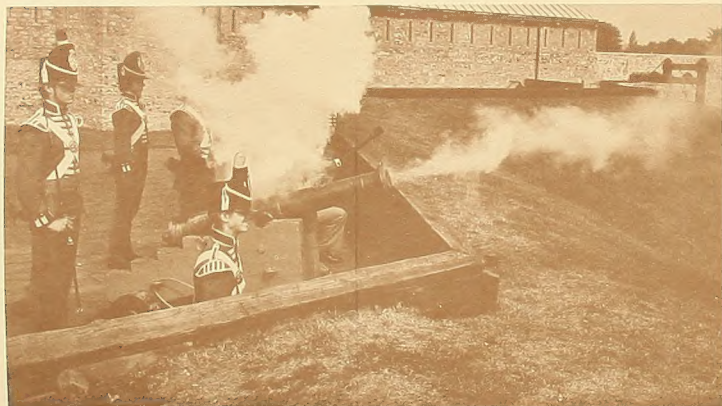
# Old Fort Erie and the War of 1812 to 1814

Document  
Publications

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Uniformed Guards of the 1812-14 War period perform various military drills and fire the cannons daily during the summer months at Old Fort Erie.

# Early Civilization

Very early in North American history, convenient water travel, excellent fishing and fertile soils attracted Indian tribes to the Fort Erie area. However, it was the abundance of flint in the rocky ledges of the local Lake Erie shoreline that kept the native people here on a continuing basis. From this stone, they fashioned their tools and weapons. In two local discoveries in 1964 & 1965, archeologists unearthed Indian artifacts and skeletons showing that occupation of this area dates back to an Early Woodland culture around 1000 B.C.

So men were born, lived, worked and died on this ground — one thousand years before Caesar invaded a barbaric island called Britain; five hundred years before the Greeks defeated the Persians at Marathon; four hundred years before the destruction of King Solomon's temple in Jerusalem; and three hundred years before the founding of Rome!

The archeological discoveries included conch shells from Florida, obsidian points from the Rocky Mountains and native copper from Northern Ontario, suggesting that even centuries ago, this was a trading crossroad to a continental hinterland.



# Three Forts

It was also for commercial reasons that the early French fur traders in Canada built a trading post here in 1750. Then, in 1764, shortly after the ceding of New France to Britain at the close of the Seven Years' War, the British began the construction of the first Fort Erie on the riverbank somewhat north of its present location. During the next fifty years, Fort Erie was a stop-over for ships carrying merchandise, troops and passengers to the Upper Great Lakes.

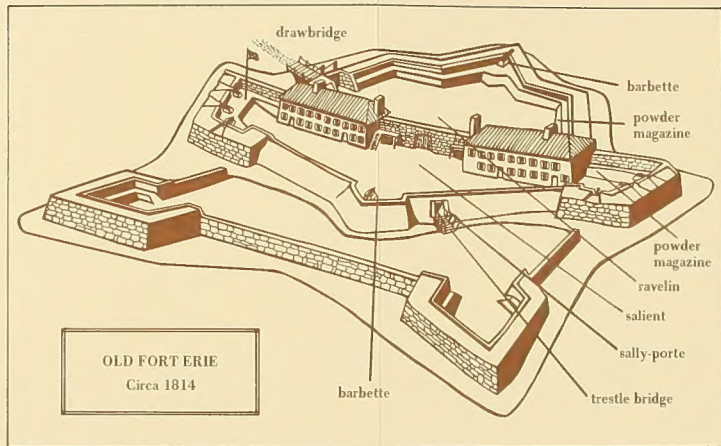
However, in March, 1779, this Fort was destroyed by large masses of ice driven ashore by a furious storm. A second Fort was begun a short distance southward (again on the river's edge, directly in front of the present site) which lasted until February 5th, 1803, when it, too, was destroyed by ice during another severe storm.

On January 9th, 1804, approval was granted to build a third Fort Erie on the knoll immediately behind the old position. Construction was slow, however, due to Britain's preoccupation with the Napoleonic Wars in Europe.

# The War of 1812~14 and Old Fort Erie

The third Fort Erie was still in an unfinished state when war with the United States broke out in 1812. But, on May 27, 1813, on the approach of an American army which had captured Fort George at the northern end of the Niagara River, it was partially dismantled and the powder magazine blown up by the small resident British garrison which then retreated to Burlington Heights and joined General John Vincent who led the Battle of Stoney Creek on June 5th. The invading United States regiment held Fort Erie until June 9th, then burned the buildings and marched back to Fort George to assist in a major offensive underway there.

The British immediately re-occupied, partially



rebuilt and held Fort Erie until July 3rd, 1814, when the garrison of approximately 170 men surrendered to General Jacob Brown's American army of 4,500 soldiers.

A large contingent of these U.S. forces then began advancing northward along the banks of the River toward Lake Ontario. Two days later, they defeated the British at the Battle of Chippawa, but on July 25th, in a bloody battle at Drummond Hill on Lundy's Lane in Niagara Falls, the British were victorious.

The U.S. troops retreated to Fort Erie, pursued by the British and the siege of the Fort began. On August 7th, the British guns commenced an eight-day bombardment of the strongly entrenched U.S. soldiers who had extended the Fort by trenches, embankments and palisades running southward parallel to the Lake for a distance of one-half mile.

At 2:00 a.m. on the morning of August 16th, the British mounted a supposedly surprise bayonet attack on the Fort on three fronts. But the Americans were expecting such a tactic, and the British without flint or shot, were decimated. Three hundred British soldiers actually got into the Fort and for a time held the northeast bastion, but due to the accidental explosion of the powder magazine under that section of the Fort, the British lodgement was wiped out.

In this unsuccessful attack, the British lost 950 men, and the siege became an affair of small attacks and counter-attacks, all taking their toll of lives. On September 17th, the U.S. troops made a full-scale sortie, destroyed two British gun emplacements during which the British lost another 600 men, then the attackers again retired to the safety of the Fort.

On September 21st, after thirteen days of continuous rain which filled their rifle pits and turned their encampment into a swamp, the British